

63 Articles

Articles are short words which come before nouns to show whether they refer to a general or a specific object. There are several rules telling which article, if any, should be used.

See also:

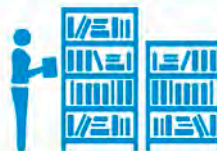
Singular and plural nouns **69** Countable and uncountable nouns **70** Superlative adjectives **97**

63.1 THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

The indefinite article "a" or "an" is used to talk about something in general.

I work in **a library**.

"A" is used to talk about the type of place where somebody works, not the specific building.



I work in **an office**.

"An" is used instead of "a" before words that start with a vowel.



The indefinite article is used to talk about a general thing among many of its type. The exact one is not yet known.

We are trying to buy **a house**.

The exact house they will buy is unknown.



The indefinite article is also used to show a noun belongs to a group or category.

Canada is **a very cold country**.

"Country" categorizes Canada, and "cold" describes it.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Dogs make **a great family pet**.



The indefinite article is used in the same way for negative statements.

Jim isn't **an artist**.



Do you want to come to **an exhibition**?

The indefinite article is used in the same way for questions.



Is there **a bank** near here?



63.2 "SOME"

"Some" replaces "a" or "an" in sentences with plural nouns.

Use "a" and "an" to talk about one thing.

"Hotel" is singular.

There is **a hotel** in the town.



There are **some hotels** in the town.



Use "some" to talk about more than one thing.

"Hotels" is plural.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

There are **some banks** on Main Street.



There are **some children** in the park.



63.3 "SOME" AND "ANY" WITH QUESTIONS AND NEGATIVES

"Some" is replaced by "any" to form questions and negatives.

There are **some cafés** in the town.

Are there **any cafés** in the town?



There are **some children** in the park.

There aren't **any children** in the park.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Are there **any museums**?



There aren't **any parks**.



Are there **any swimming pools**?



There aren't **any factories**.



63.4 THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

The definite article “the” is used to talk about a specific person or thing that everyone understands.

We went on a tour and **the guide** was excellent.

It is clear from the context that this means the tour guide.



When a person or thing has been mentioned already, “the” is used the next time the thing or person is talked about.

There’s a bus trip or a lecture. I’d prefer **the bus trip**.

The bus trip has already been mentioned.



The definite article is used before superlatives.

The Colosseum is probably **the most famous** site in Rome.

Superlative phrase.



The definite article is also used with unique objects.

I’m going to **the Trevi Fountain** before I leave.

There is only one Trevi Fountain.



It is also used for people with unique titles.

The Pope is visiting another country this week.

“Pope” is a title.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

What is **the biggest country** in the world?



I never take **the first train** to work in the morning.



I love this restaurant. **The waiters** are great.



I went to Paris and climbed **the Eiffel Tower**.



Did you buy those shoes from **the shoe shop** on Broad Lane?



The President will be speaking on TV tonight.



63.5 USING "THE" TO SPECIFY

"The" can be followed by a prepositional phrase or a defining relative clause to specify which thing someone is talking about.

The pictures **on the wall** are beautiful.



This makes it clear which pictures are being referred to.

The dog **that I saw earlier** was adorable.



This makes it clear which dog is being talked about.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

The computers **in this office** are all too slow.



The books **that I bought** yesterday are for my son's birthday.



The students **in my classes** are very intelligent and dedicated.



The pastries **that they sell here** are absolutely delicious.



63.6 "THE" WITH ADJECTIVES FOR CERTAIN GROUPS

Some adjectives can be used with the definite article to refer to a group or class of people.

Rich people have bought most of the new houses in this town.



Almost all the houses here are owned by **the rich**.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Emergency treatment for **the injured** is essential.



Many charities try to protect **the poor**.



The media sometimes portrays **the young** as lazy.



The elderly often need the support of their families.



TIP

These phrases are plural in meaning, but it's incorrect to say "the youngs," etc.

63.7 THE ZERO ARTICLE

An article is not needed with uncountable and plural nouns used in a general context. This is known as the zero article.

I don't like the beach.
I get **sand** everywhere.

Uncountable noun.

Plural noun.



You can see **famous sights** all over New York City.



The zero article is also used with some places and institutions when it is clear what their purpose is.

Liz is seven. She goes **to school** now.

She goes there to study, which is the purpose of schools, so no article is used.



Larry works at **the school** in Park Street.

The definite article is used to talk about the specific school where he works.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Coffee is one of Colombia's major exports.



Kangaroos are common in Australia.



I am studying Engineering **in college** in Chicago.



Liz goes **to school** at 8am.



In the UK, **children** start school when they are five years old.



I've got so many **books**.



Paris is the capital of France.

Names of places often take the zero article.



Go **to bed**, Tom!



63.8 THE ZERO ARTICLE AND GENERIC "THE"

The zero article can be used with plural nouns to talk about a class of things in general. This can also be done with the definite article, plus a singular noun.

Referring to an invention, not an individual telescope.

Telescopes
The telescopes } changed the way we see the night sky.



Referring to a species of animal, not an individual animal.

Cheetahs
The cheetahs } can run faster than any other land animal.



Referring to a type of musical instrument, not an individual instrument.

Violins are
The violin is } often the key instrument in an orchestra.



63.9 DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE ARTICLES WITH NAMES

The zero article is normally used with the name of a person.

This is my uncle, **Neil Armstrong**.



The definite article is used before a person's name to differentiate them from another person with the same name.

In this case, "the" is pronounced "thee."

He's not **the Neil Armstrong**, is he?
[He isn't the famous person with that name, is he?]



The indefinite article is used when the focus is on a particular name, rather than the person.

I'm afraid there isn't
a **"Joseph Bloggs"** on the list.
[The particular name given is not on the list.]



64 Articles overview

64.1 USING ARTICLES

SINGULAR NOUNS

Singular nouns must be used with an article. The definite article ("the") or indefinite article ("a / an") can be used, depending on whether the object is being spoken about in general or specific terms.



PLURAL NOUNS

The indefinite article "a / an" cannot be used with plural nouns. "Some" is used instead for plural nouns when referring to an indefinite quantity of something.



UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS

The indefinite article is not usually used with uncountable nouns. The definite article is used to talk about uncountable nouns in specific terms, and the zero article is used to talk about them in general terms.



INDEFINITE ARTICLE

"A" refers to cars in general, not the car he wants to buy.

He wants to buy **a new car**. ✓

I've got **a beautiful green coat**. ✓

"A" is used because the green coat is something new that is being introduced.

The indefinite article cannot be used for plural nouns.

Sam bought **a new shoes** today. ✗

I've just planted **some roses**. ✓

"Some" suggests a limited number of roses, but the exact number is unknown.

"A / an" cannot be used with uncountable nouns.

I left **a money** on the table. ✗

Children should drink **a milk**. ✗

The definite and indefinite articles are used in different situations, and this can depend on whether they are being used with a singular, plural, or uncountable noun.

See also:

Singular and plural nouns **69**

Countable and uncountable nouns **70**

DEFINITE ARTICLE

"The" is used to talk about a specific car that the speaker and listener both know about.

Is **the** red car outside yours? ✓

I want to buy **the green coat** ✓
hanging in the window.

The definite article is used to talk about plural nouns in specific terms.

The shoes Sam bought ✓
were very expensive.

The roses you planted ✓
outside are beautiful.

The speaker is referring to specific money that the listener already knows about, so the definite article is used.

I left **the money** on the table. ✓

Children should drink **the milk**. ✗

Milk is an uncountable noun which is being spoken about in general terms, so the definite article can't be used.

ZERO ARTICLE

This is wrong. Singular countable nouns must have an article.

I've got **new car**. ✗

I've got beautiful **green coat**. ✗

No article is used because "shoes" is a plural noun being spoken about in a general context.

Sam is always buying **shoes**. ✓

Roses are a type of flower. ✓

Roses are being spoken about in general terms. There's no idea of a number.

No article is used because "money" is being spoken about in a general sense.

She earns a lot of **money**. ✓

Children should drink **milk**. ✓

"This," "that," "these," and "those" can be used as determiners before a noun to specify which noun is being talked about. They can also be used as pronouns to replace a noun in a sentence.

See also:

 Singular and plural nouns **69**

 Personal pronouns **77** Possession **80**

65.1 "THIS" AND "THAT" AS DETERMINERS

"This" and "that" are only used with singular nouns. "This" is used for something close, and "that" for something farther away.



This house is too big.

↖ The house is close to you.



That house is too small.

↖ The house is farther away from you.



This job is great.

↖ "This" refers to the job that the speaker is currently doing.



That job was boring.

↖ "That" refers to a job in the past that isn't being done anymore.

↖ "Was" is in the past tense.

"This" can also be used for something current or present, and "that" can be used for something absent or in the past.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



This essay is proving to be really difficult.



That cake in the window looks incredible.



I like **this** rabbit so much I want to take it home.



I'd like to see **that** play this weekend.



When I eat out I always order **this** rice dish.

↖ Uncountable nouns are only used with "this" and "that," never "these" and "those."



This show is great, but I didn't like **that** other show as much.

↖ "Other" can be used after "that" to stress that it is different to the first noun.

65.2 "THESE" AND "THOSE" AS DETERMINERS

"These" and "those" are only used with plural nouns. "These" is used for things close by or current. "Those" is used for things farther away or in the past.

This cake is delicious.



These cakes are delicious.

"These" is the plural of "this."

"These" and "those" go before plural nouns.



That sandwich tastes bad.



Those sandwiches look better.

"Those" is the plural of "that."

"These" and "those" go before plural nouns.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

These new shoes are hurting my feet.



I hope **these** exams go well.



I don't think **these** vegetables are very fresh.



These books are so heavy! I can't carry them.



These books are so heavy! I can't carry them.



Those sunglasses look great on you!



I like the look of **those** Caribbean cruises..



I'll take **those** apples and **these** bananas, please.



65.3 "THIS" AND "THAT" AS PRONOUNS

"This" and "that" can replace singular nouns in a sentence. They point out a specific thing. "This" is used for something close, and "that" is used for something farther away.



This is my dog.

The dog is close to you.



That is my dog.

The dog is farther away from you.



"This" can also be used for something current or present, and "that" can be used for something absent or in the past.



This is a great party.

"This" means the party is happening now.



That was such a fun party yesterday.

"That" means the party has already happened.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

This is a great honor. Thank you everyone for coming.



This has always been the most beautiful park.



This is the perfect laptop for creative work.



This is the best soup I've ever tasted.



That was so exciting.



If you could do a blow-dry, **that** would be great.



That sounded out of tune. I'd get the piano fixed.



That looks great. Is the car new?



65.4 "THESE" AND "THOSE" AS PRONOUNS

"These" and "those" can replace plural nouns in a sentence. "These" is used for things close by or current. "Those" is used for things farther away or in the past.


This is my bag.


That is my bag. 



"These" is the plural of "this."


These are my bags.

"Those" is the plural of "that."


Those are my bags. 

"These" and "those" are also used for contrast. "These" things belong to one person.


These are my bags and **those** are your bags. 

"Those" things belong to another person.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

These are the best kind of shoes to wear when running.



I think **those** will probably taste better with sauce.



These are the only clothes I own.



Those aren't very good for you. Try **these** instead.



65.5 SUBSTITUTING WITH "THAT" AND "THOSE"

"That" and "those" can be used in place of a noun phrase to mean "the one" or "the ones."


The new policy is better than **that** of before.

"That" refers to "policy."


I disapprove of **those** who don't recycle.

"Those who" means "people who."

66 “No / none”

“No” and “none” both show the absence or lack of something. “No” is always used with a noun, whereas “none” replaces a noun in a sentence.

See also:

Singular and plural nouns **69**

Countable and uncountable nouns **70**

66.1 “NO”

“No” is only used with uncountable nouns or plural countable nouns.

There was **no** time to cook a meal.

[There wasn't any time to cook a meal.]

Uncountable noun.



I have **no** ingredients in my kitchen.

[I don't have any ingredients in my kitchen.]

Plural noun.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

This menu has **no** vegetarian options.



I would have booked a restaurant but there were **no** tables.



No waiters were available to take our order.



There are **no** recipes in this book that I haven't tried.



66.2 “NO” AND NOUN FOR EMPHASIS

Although “no” has the same meaning as “not any” in this context, “no” is often emphatic.

There wasn't **any** food left.

There was **no** food left!

This version of the sentence can indicate surprise or disappointment.



66.3 "NONE"

"None" can replace "no" plus noun to indicate a lack of something.

I wanted some pizza, but there was **none** left.

[I wanted some pizza, but there was no pizza left.]

"Left" shows that there was some pizza before.

"None of" is used before pronouns and nouns with determiners.

None of the pizza was left.



"None" can also be used on its own to answer a question about quantity.

How much pizza is there?



None.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

I wanted the soup, but there was **none** left.



I would have bought balloons, but there were **none** in the shop.



I love this suit, but there are **none** here in my size.



None of the people eating at the restaurant enjoyed their food.



I offered my friends some chocolate, but they wanted **none of** it.



This restaurant has **none of** the food that I like.



"None" and "none of" can be more emphatic than "not any."

67 "Each / every"

"Each" and "every" are words that go before singular nouns to refer to all members of a group of people or things.

See also:
Singular and plural nouns 69

67.1 "EACH" AND "EVERY"

In most cases, there is no difference in meaning between "each" and "every."

I buy more and more **{ each / every }** time I go shopping.

Means all the times.



{ Each / Every } place we stopped at was beautiful.

Means all the places.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

The host made sure he greeted **each** guest at the party.



Last summer I went to visit my grandmother **every** day.



Each person on the beach was developing a bad sunburn.



I always try **every** kind of ice cream when I go abroad.



COMMON MISTAKES "EACH" AND "EVERY"

Unlike "each," "every" cannot be used to talk about just two things.

She had an earring in **each** ear. ✓

She had an earring in **every** ear. ✗

She only has two ears, so "every" can't be used here.



67.2 "EACH"

"Each" is used to talk separately about every member of a group.



You must check **each** answer carefully.

"Each" is also used when talking about small numbers.



Each pencil is a different color.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I get more awake after **each** cup of coffee.



I took lots of time over **each** application I made.



Each player on my team contributed to our win.



Each friend who visited me brought a gift.



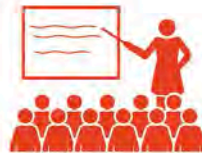
67.3 "EVERY"

"Every" is used when speaking about the whole group of something.



I want to eat **every** piece of this delicious pie.

"Every" is also used when talking about large numbers.



Every child has the right to an education.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Every night I look up at all the stars in the sky.



My colleague says he's visited **every** country in the world.



Every fan in the stadium was cheering loudly.



I can't remember **every** hotel I've ever stayed in.



68 "Either / neither / both"

"Either," "neither," and "both" are used in situations where two options are being described. They indicate that one, two, or none of the options are possible.

See also:

Articles **63** Singular and plural nouns **69**
Personal pronouns **77**

68.1 "EITHER," "NEITHER," AND "BOTH"

"Either" means "one or the other" of two options and is used before a singular noun.

You could enter **either** tournament.

Indicates that there are two tournaments.



"Neither" means "not one and not the other" of two options and is used before a singular noun. It has the same meaning as a negative statement with "either."

Neither event is being shown on TV.

Singular noun.

[They're not showing either event on TV.]



"Both" means "each one of two" and is used before a plural noun, or after a plural pronoun.

I ran in **both** [the] races.

A determiner, such as "the," "these," or "my" can be used after "both."



I ran in **them both**.

A plural pronoun can go before "both."

ANOTHER WAY TO SAY IT

"Either," "neither," and "both" can be used alone when the context is clear.



Would you like potatoes or salad with your steak?

Either.



Neither.



Both.



68.2 "NEITHER OF," "EITHER OF," AND "BOTH OF"

"Either of," "neither of," and "both of" are used before a plural pronoun or a determiner plus a plural noun.

"Bicycles" is a plural noun.
I could buy **either of** these bicycles,
but I don't really need **either of** them.



"Them" is a plural pronoun.

We won **neither of** the races.
Neither of us trained hard enough.



"Of" is optional after
"both" when a determiner is
used with the noun.

We train with **both (of)** our coaches.
They are proud of **both of** us.



Plural personal pronouns "us," "you," and "them" can be used with "either of," "neither of," and "both of" as a subject as well as an object.

I danced with **both of** them.



"Them" is the object.

Neither of you can dance.



"You" is the subject.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I wasn't able to get tickets
for **either of** the first heats.



Neither of the athletes
are very fit.



I'm going to watch **both** the
equestrian events later today.



Either of them could win the
contest. It's hard to call.



We thought **neither of** them
would be able to finish.



Both of you are strong
contenders. You deserve to win.



68.3 "EITHER... OR," "NEITHER... NOR," AND "BOTH... AND"

"Either... or" and "neither... nor" are used to compare options, usually noun phrases, prepositional phrases, or clauses.

I want **either** the cake **or** the cookie.



Neither the cake **nor** the cookie tasted good.



"Nor" can only be used with "neither."

"Neither" is only used with a positive verb.

"Either... or" and "neither... nor" can be used with two or more options.

The first two options are separated with a comma.

I want to play **either** tennis, badminton, **or** squash.



Neither basketball, golf, **nor** hockey are the sports for me.



"Both... and" is the opposite of "neither... nor," but can only be used with two options.

I want **both** the cake **and** the cookie.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

We'll meet up on **either** Tuesday **or** Wednesday.



I'm going to play **either** tennis, basketball, **or** hockey tonight.



My teacher told me I could **neither** paint **nor** draw.



Neither sports **nor** exercise interest me.



I invited **both** my grandmother **and** my uncle.



I went to **both** the bakery **and** the butcher shop.



68.4 AGREEMENT AFTER "EITHER... OR" AND "NEITHER... NOR"

When "either... or" or "neither... nor" are used to join two nouns, the verb usually agrees with the second noun.

Either a tablet or a **laptop is** needed for the course.

The verb agrees with the second, singular noun.



Neither the teacher nor the **children were** happy.

The verb agrees with the second, plural noun.



If the second noun is singular and the first is plural, either a singular verb or a plural verb can be used.

Neither the **classrooms** nor the **office** { **has** / **have** } internet access.

The verb can be singular or plural.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Either a loan or a **grant is** available for financial help.



I hope either sandwiches or **soup is** on the menu today.



Either my brother or my **grandparents are** coming.



Either pens or **pencils are** suitable to use in the exam.



Neither the swimming pool nor the **gym is** open on Sundays.



Neither a shirt nor a **tie is** compulsory at school.



Neither the bread nor the **cakes are** ready yet.



Neither calculators nor **study notes are** allowed in the exam.

